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AUTHOR Gill, Wanda E.
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ABSTRACT

The education of the black child must be perceived as a partnership between parents, school teachers, administrators, and the community. That partnership needs to be cemented with understanding, open communication, and trust. Black children's test scores are the lowest of any group in the country and the gap between the educational performances of black and white children increases as they progress through school. This reflects the erosion of the partnership as children go through school, and parents, teaches and administrators send messages of independence to the child that are sometimes seen as growing lack of interest. The overall goal of any educational system is to produce functionally literate adults: to this end, experiential learning in cultural centers and a suitable study environment are important. The child should be taught the following aspects of citizenship: ethics; the functions of Federal, State, and local government; the American political system; and the responsibility of voting. The community also needs to address the effects of middle class values on homes that do not depict such values. At the same time, against a backdrop of declining higher education aid for blacks, there is a special need to prepare black children for college, and the trend toward teacher testing as the measure of teaching ability, which threatens the black classroom teacher, must be turned back in favor of a system in which the test is only one of many criteria. Finally, the black family and the black community bear the major responsibility for the quality and monitoring of the black child's educational experience. The official convention program giving the day's schedule and a note on background and purpose and listing the conventions officers and sponsoring organizations, is attached. (RDN)

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THE P.G. COUNTY CONVENTION OF BLACK PEOPLE

2nd ANNUAL CONVENTION

THEME: EDUCATION AND THE BLACK FAMILY

JUNE 22, 1985

BOWIE STATE COLLEGE

EDUCATION AND THE BLACK FAMILY

A Framework for Quality Education
Setting Goals and Objectives
Developing A Philosophy of Education and
Strengthening Community and Parental Involvement

by

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EDUCATION AND THE BLACK FAMILY

A Framework for Quality Education: Setting Goals and Objectives. Developing A Philosophy of Education and Strengthening Community and Parental Involvement

by

Wanda E. Gill

Abstract

On June 22, 1985, the Prince Georges County Convention of Black People, 2nd Annual Convention, convened to discuss the theme "Education and the Black Family." The author was a panelist on the topic "A Framework for Quality Education. Setting Goals and Objectives. Developing A Philosophy of Education and Strengthening Community and Parental Involvement." The Facilitator was Otis Ducker. Other panelists were Joann Benson, Paula Matabane, Rita Robinson and Carolyn Howard. The following represents a synopsis of the author's presentation.

The Black Family today is typically a female headed household at or below the poverty level (one third of all black families) with an average of three children living in an urban area. Within Prince Georges County, Maryland, the main difference in the definition is suburban rather than urban area. However, many of these black families have recently (within the last 10 years) moved from neighboring Washington, D.C. and have brought with them the problems, mindsets, attitudes, beliefs and values that typified their existence in an urban setting. The following narrative is written for the urban black child in a suburban area who has merely moved from the city.

Any philosophy of education must have as its underlying assumption, the belief that parents, school administrators, teachers and the community at large have the best interests of the child in mind when educational policies and practices are set. This assumption forms the basis of the following discussion with the complete recognition that when any one segment of the community negatively impacts on the black child's education, other segments must unite and take action to correct those policies. Speaking specifically of Prince Georges County, Maryland, the N.A.A.C.P. took action on behalf of black children who were being educated in predominantly or all black schools during the 1970's. The detrimental effects of such an educational system for all children have already been addressed by Kenneth Clark, Robert Coles, Alvin Pouissant and the Justices of the Supreme Court in Brown vs. the Board of Education. It is the N.A.A.C.P. suit in Prince Georges County that brought Judge Kaufman to issue the busing edict. When the N.A.A.C.P. charged resegregation, Judge Kaufman commissioned Dr. Robert Green to study the P.G. County schools and make recommendations on how to integrate the school system. Dr. Green's report was met with strong opposition from most sectors of

the community. The school system proposed a plan for magnet schools which will be implemented in the fall of 1985. The magnet school implementation plan is on a trial basis. If magnet schools are not successful, busing will be reinstituted county-wide. With busing, the Green Report and the Magnet School Concept, we see all segments of the community coming together to influence school district policy that affects the distance travelled by youngsters seeking an education. The issue is a highly emotive one. Parents, school administrators, teachers and the community at large must maintain the best educational interests of the child in affecting policy which impacts on education.

With this underlying assumption in tact, the education of the black child must be perceived as a partnership between parents, school teachers, administrators and the community. The partnership needs to be cemented with understanding, open communication and trust. The partners need to recognize that leadership in the black community, directly affected by education, is under siege. Black children's test scores are the lowest of any group in the county school system, regardless of educational level. The trend seems to be that as black children go through the system from elementary to secondary to post-secondary school, the greater are the educational losses. Phrased another way, the educational performance of black children is most like white children in elementary school. The standardized test scores show a trend of increasing gaps between black and white children as they progress through school. This trend shows the actual erosion of the partnership as children go through school. Parents, teachers, administrators and community members are interested in and actively support programs and policies that affect elementary school children. As the child grows and develops and goes through junior high school and high school, parents, teachers and administrators send messages of independence to the child that sometimes gets communicated as disinterest and lack of involvement. Unfortunately, too many black children believe that their parent(s) have no

interest in their course of study at the junior and senior high school levels. This frequently unspoken message is often transmitted by single heads of households who must frequently work full and part-time jobs to earn a living so that the family can survive. Frequently the survival issue translates into working children or unsupervised children (latch key children). Day care centers, the working parent's aid, are expensive in Prince Georges County. Many single parents have swapped baby sitting times. These are teachable moments when homework can be completed and when interpersonal issues can be addressed. The parent or parent substitute is the child's first teacher and the child's most natural teacher. In the black community, parents have not always been taught the functional skills of reading, writing and arithmetic themselves. This is why we need classes on functional skills as well as parenting to teach parents what and how to teach their children.

The overall goal of any educational system is to have functionally literate adults. Within the context of this overall goal are the objectives to teach reading, writing and mathematics to all children. The activities and teaching environments need to support the life long goal of learning how to learn. Learning how to learn means supporting the child's natural curiosity which translate into adult research. The use of museum's educational programs and exploration that allows for sensing (touching, smelling, tasting, hearing, seeing) need to be used more for educating the black child. Experiential learning through museums and exploration create teachable moments that motivate the black child to read more, to write reports and to apply mathematical calculations when simulating structures seen at the museum. Thus functional literacy can be transformed from laboriously tedious terms to practical applications that are exciting and relevant for the child. Stated in this way, the goals and objectives are met with creative activities that tend to foster learning rather than to stifle it.

Cultural centers like museums need to greatly increase their holdings to reflect the black community in natural ways rather than in forced segregated systems ways. In other words, any display of American sculptors should naturally include black male and female sculptors. The picture identification of the sculptors would allow for the identification of minorities included in exhibits. Parents can support the goal of functional literacy with activities that provide exposure by taking youngsters to free exhibits, concerts and plays. A good source of free or low cost cultural activities is the local library or newspaper. Parents need to regularly visit the child's school to monitor the child's learning environment. Parents can also work with the PTA, volunteer in the classroom or library and support the teacher by providing the child with a study environment at home. The study environment could well be the kitchen table just after school. The study area should be free of distractors like radios, televisions and peers engaged in conversation. The study time should be a quiet time when the child can concentrate, read, write, recite and review the material and complete assigned homework. The parent should stipulate the same time each day as study time and should check the child's homework or verbally quiz the child on what has been learned. This shows the child the parent's interest in and support of education. The parent is demonstrating to the child that a partnership exists between the home, school, community and child. The child does the homework, studies and questions in the partnership.

The goal of citizenship is certainly supported by the above activites. However, the specific objectives under citizenship are:

1. To demonstrate ethics to the child.
2. To teach the child the functions of federal, state and local government.
3. To teach the child the American political system and process.
4. To teach the child the responsibility of voting.

The activities which support objectives 2, 3, and 4 can be mock elections once students have researched and debated the issues. The activities can include discussions and demonstrations of gerrymandering, red-lining and campaign strategies. Ethics (objective #1)(or the lack of them) can be demonstrated in each activity. Ethics is the descriptor preferred to morality in the black community. Ethics has a universal code of taboos like indiscriminate death and incest (Max Webber's discussion). The term is broader and more universal than morality which is majority culture specific. It is the construct of morality that has caused so much discussion in the black community. However, black parents need to be mindful of the fact that white middle class values dominate the larger society and are clearly transmitted by the television story-lines throughout the day. Research indicates that black children see four(4) hours of television per day and do four(4) hours of homework per week. Hence, the middle class morality is brought into the black family's home. Therefore, parents need to carefully consider the effects of middle class values in homes that do not depict these values. Three recommendations are made on this issue.

Recommendation #1: The child be exposed to a single boyfriend or girlfriend or none at all.

Recommendation #2: Single parents must cease and desist from high turnover transient live-in arrangements.

Recommendation #3: The parent controls television time. One hour per day is a just reward for study. Remove the television from the home if all else fails.

These recommendations are highlighted and clearly identified because they are family dynamics centered. These are tough areas that school personnel will not address but that we, the community, need to address. The goal of these recommendations is to protect the child and to preserve childhood. Too often we parents expect children to deal with grown-up problems before they are ready to. This leads to anger and hostility in the child that affects the child's functioning in the school.

A clearly dfined philosophy of education, with goals and objectives for parents, schools and the community is critical for the black community today. We must prepare all black children who are physically and psychologically able, for college. College preparation is not an option for the black child. Counselors at the secondary level must cease and desist from limiting our children's access to educational opportunity by counseling them into vocational education or electives that are easy. Our children must be prepared to enter college by taking college prep courses. If our children chose a vocation, later, they can get the training. The key is to provide the black child with college prep courses and to encourage the child to complete a four year college degree. This must be the goal if we, as a people, are to survive.

A few current facts show the state of higher education in black America today. According to Valerie Lee, author of Access to Higher Education: The Experience of Blacks, Hispanics and Low Socio-Economic Status Whites, (May 1985),

- Black and Hispanic seniors were the least represented in the high ability group of graduates.
- Two years after high school graduation, 59% of black women and 41% of black men withdrew from post-secondary education.
- 56% of black women withdrew from post-secondary school for financial reasons.

According to a report, Student Aid and Minority Enrollment in Higher Education, prepared for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities,

- There was a 4.7% drop in blacks receiving student aid between 1978 and 1983.
- The drop in blacks receiving student aid at four year public colleges dropped by 7% between 1978 and 1983.
- Blacks receiving student aid at all private post-secondary institutions dropped 1.9% between 1978 and 1983.

The fact that blacks have been awarded less aid between 1978 and 1983 and the fact that blacks are dropping out for financial reasons indicate that

financial aid officers are not awarding monies to black students, black attendance rates are down or black students are unaware of how or where to apply for financial aid. This finding is consistent with articles in The Chronicle of Higher Education and Higher Education Daily (April 8, 1985) which speaks to low income, minority, women, female single parents as categories who would lose substantial amounts of financial aid under the Reagan Plan. The headline in the Chronicle of Education (19) speaks to "Each of 25,000 students from Poor Families Seen Losing $1,160 in Aid Under Reagan Plan."

Education Week, April 17, 1985, published an article by Sheppard Ranbom, J.R. Sirkin and M. Sandra Reeves on the deterioration of enrollment gains by minorities in colleges. The article indicates an 11% drop in black high school graduates going to college between 1975 and 1981. Poor minority students tend to go to community college and the least selective four-year institutions.

These post-secondary school enrollment decline trends and drop in black student financial aid trends are occuring at a time when teacher certification issues, so ably presented by Mary E. Dilworth in Teacher's Totter, threaten the future of black teachers in the profession. The specific issues are national and state testing of teachers and teacher training curriculum. The trend for testing as the measure of teaching ability threatens the black classroom teacher at a time in history when black children are in desperate need of black role models. The clear cut recommendation is that the black community monitor the school system and lobby at the state level that the test be one criterion of teaching ability. All child advocates want literate teachers in the classroom. The test serves as a performance criterion for the old or new teacher. Tests must be given regularly to allow those teachers who do not pass, other opportunities to pass. Other criteria for teachers include rapport with children, ability to motivate children and knowledge of how to teach reading, writing, and arith -

metic at the elementary school level and other courses at the secondary school level. Often, teachers begin in the system without the "how" of teaching. These issues are just a few that impact on the black community as it strives to provide academic excellence for the black child. The white community needs to be supportive of the black community as it puzzles through the maze of educational issues that impact on our children. The intent is not to segregate out black children from the universal pool of children but rather to more effectively deal with educational issues that affect this special group of children. Just as there are issues that affect female children or gifted children, so there are issues that affect the black child. As the process continues, the white community is called upon to serve as consultants or information providers, as needed. However, it is the black family and the black community that bears the major responsibility for providing for the quality of and monitoring the experience of the education of the black child.

Bibliography

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Convention Registration
Prince George's County Convention of Black People
P.O. Box 115
Suitland, Maryland 20746

Sponsoring Organizations

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity,
Kappa Epsilon Lambda Chapter
of Prince Georges County

Black Caucus of Prince George's County, Inc.

The First Baptist Church of North Brentwood, Inc.

Delta Zeta Zeta Chapter,
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority of Prince George's County

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& Rosenbaum, P.A. Attorneys-at-law

Black Democratic Council of Prince George's County

Prince George's Coalition on Black Affairs (COBA)

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY CONVENTION OF BLACK PEOPLE

EDUCATION AND THE BLACK FAMILY

June 22, 1985

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Activities Center
Bowie State College
Bowie, Maryland

"THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES"

Three hundred and seventeen convened on April 14, 1984 at Bowie State College, the first convention of Black People in the County. The success of the Convention created a new sense of vision within the Black Community. Black organizational leaders, civic, religious, political, fraternal, and business, have worked together, as a result of the convention with a renewed sense of commitment to the progress of the Black Community.

The 1985 Convention will focus on *Education and the Black Family* and will include a workshop on *Economic Development*. Current debates on quality education and the Board of Education's magnet plan for the public schools promise to intensify the Convention sessions. We must become the guardians of our educational and economic experiences in Prince George's County.

OFFICERS OF THE CONVENTION

Alvin Thornton, Ph.D., Chairman
Carolyn Howard, Vice-Chairman
Linwood Jones, Secretary
Helen Hutchinson, Secretary
Clement Martin, Treasurer
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Leon Perry, Budget
Del. Jerry E. Perry, Publicity
Steve Tillett, Young Adults
Malcolm Funn, Evaluation

For Additional Information:
336-5273, 350-5055 or 420-6359

Program

EDUCATION AND THE BLACK FAMILY

Saturday, June 22, 1985
Workshops:
8:00 A.M.—5:00 P.M.

Registration ..... 8:00 A.M.—Continuing
Opening Session ..... 8:45 A.M.—9:45 A.M.
Morning Workshops ..... 10:00 A.M.—12:00 Noon

Discipline

Focus will be upon disproportionate suspensions, codes of student conduct, discipline centers, and teacher and administrative training.

Magnet Schools

Magnet TAG and Workplace schools as desegregation tools, the experience of other jurisdictions, compensatory education and back-up plans.

Strategies for Teaching Black Students

Cultural orientation, support systems, counseling, expectations and standards, and academic achievement as an integral part of the education of Black children.

Administration and Management in the School System

Dealing with minority administration and staff, finances and allocation of resources, ability grouping, and human relations training.

A Framework for Quality Education

Setting goals and objectives, developing a philosophy of education, and strengthening community and parental involvement.

Developing a Symposium on Economic Development

To focus on strategies for improving the economic situation of Black people in the County. Community and small business development, corporate responsibility, and economic education will be some of the issues discussed.

Lunch ..... 12:00 Noon—1:00 P.M.
General Session ..... 1:00 P.M.—1:30 P.M.
Keynote Address—Samuel Banks, Ph.D., President of Associations for the Study of Afro-American Life and History
Afternoon Workshops ..... 1:45 P.M.—3:45 P.M.
(Repeat Morning Workshops)
Plenary Session ..... 4:00 P.M.—5:00 P.M.

REGISTER TO VOTE: CALL 627-2814

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

Please mail not later than June 15, 1985. Registration will also be held at Convention site. *No Charge* for conference, registration & workshop material.

Name _____ Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Organizational Affiliation _____

—Lunch will be available at the Bowie State College—

Please check the workshop (you may select two) you will attend.

Discipline ☐ Administration & Management in the P.G. County ☐ Developing a Symposium on Economic Development
Magnet Schools ☐ Strategies for Teaching Black Students ☐ A Framework for Quality Education